

London, City of

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SERIOUS and AFFECTIONATE

ADDRESS

To the CITIES of

London and Westminster;

Occasioned by the late

EARTHQUAKE.

The SECOND EDITION.



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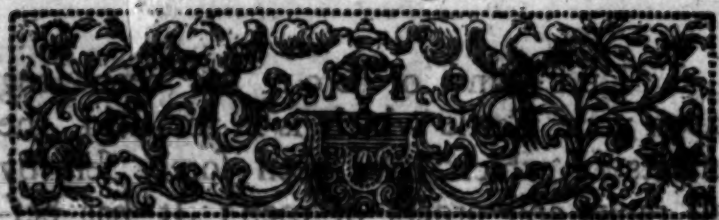
London and Westminster
O. Stoughton by the late

EARTHQUAKE.



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SERIOUS and AFFECTIONATE

ADDRESS

To the CITIES of

London and Westminster.

Fellow Citizens, and Fellow Christians,



THE general consternation you have been under from the late Shock of an Earthquake, I hope has had its due effect, and been a more alarming call to Repentance, than ten thousand Sermons, or Acts of Parliament. — You have had many calls from Heaven, which few have heard with due attention.

I. THE hand of GOD has been long upon your Cattle which is in the field, the effects of which have been sorely felt by all ranks and orders of men: It has baffled the skill of Physick, and the Precautions of Policy; and how much longer it may last, and whether it may not reach to the other species of Cattle, and at last to ourselves, none can tell, but all have reason to fear.

II. THE *Locusts* have made their appearance in small numbers for two or three years together, as a warning from heaven, that except ye repent, they will come as an overflowing scourge, as they did upon the land of *Egypt*, *Exod. x. 15.* *so that they covered the face of the earth, so that the land was darkened: They eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees, so that there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field.*

The publick Papers inform you, that this has been the case of many of our neighbour nations, who can hardly be imagined to be greater sinners than ourselves. From whence we have reason to fear, that, except we repent, the same scourge will fall upon

upon us, that has so long lain heavy upon them : And whether this open, mild Winter, may not help to produce them in greater numbers, time must shew. The dealers in *second Causes*, who have very wild notions of Providence, tell you, you need not be afraid of these Insects, that they are produced only in hot countries, and can only by accident be brought hither, or subsist in these cold climates. But experience has shewn us, that from whatever country they come, they are here, and can live and breed here; and where they have appeared in great numbers, as they did last Summer in several parts of the country, have done incredible mischief; and should God for our sins permit them to multiply among us, to devour the grass, the green corn, and all the tender productions of the fields and gardens, imagination itself cannot conceive the distress and terror that must attend it.

III. You have just now been visited with an *Earthquake*, at the same time that the western parts of the Kingdom have been ravaged by violent Storms and Tempests, and you have just received the shocking account of the Storms and Destruction
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in the *East-Indies*. Can you see, and hear, and feel these dreadful tokens of divine displeasure, and be still insensible! God forbid.

I MUST own, I expected to see in some or other of the Daily or Weekly Papers, which are published in this great Metropolis, some religious improvement of this general consternation; some serious address to serious Readers; some awakening call to the Unconverted and Impenitent: — But instead of this, we have seen a dry, cold, formal account, of the natural causes of *Earthquakes*, published in the *London Evening Post**: The Author of which seems to account for it wholly by *second Causes*, without the least regard to the Great Creator and Judge of the world, who as the First and Supreme Cause of all, has given, and continues to give these second Causes, their several powers and directions; not a word of the Moral and Judicial Causes, which never fail to produce their proper and genuine Effects upon the Children of Disobedience.

* Vide *London Evening Post*, Feb. 13, 1749-50.

but I would not be so uncharitable to the Author of this humane, philosophical Address, as to charge him with intentions which perhaps he never had: But the best that can be imagined is this; That he was either desired, or commanded, or hired by some *Lovers of Mankind*, (as they call themselves) to publish this account, in order to remove the terrors, and compose the minds of the weak and superstitious, by assuring them, that there is nothing in the whole affair but the ordinary effects of *second Causes*; and these he reckons to be four. *First*, "The Earth itself." *Secondly*, "Subterraneous Waters." *Thirdly*, "The Air pent up in the too narrow viscera of the Earth." *Fourthly*, "Fire is the principal Cause, both as it produces the subterraneous Air or Vapour, from the different matter or composition of which, arise Sulphur, Bitumen, and other inflammable substances; so that it is kindled either by some other fire it meets with, or its collision against hard bodies, or its intermixture with other fluids, and bursting out into a greater compass, the adjoining Parts are shaken; till having forced a passage, it spends itself in a Volcano. —

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“ An Earthquake, *he says*, happened at Oxford, 1665. and another in 1683.” And so he concludes as calmly as he begun — “ But they are not attended here with the terrible appearances they have in hotter countries.” — How cool and comfortable is this account ! With what insipid serenity does he attempt to compose the terrors, which this trifling accident may have raised among weak and ignorant people ! — It is more than probable, that some fine Gentlemen and Ladies may have been discomposed by this unseasonable shock, in the midst of their pleasures ; that it might possibly have baulk’d many an assignation, and spoiled many a merry meeting. It might possibly drive some polite, miserable sinners to Church or Confession ; who would otherwise have graced the Theatres, Amphitheatres, and other places of genteel resort and entertainment ; and in short, give a check to all that gay Idolatry that reigns among the worshippers of the *God of this world*. And if the Managers of the several Play-houses found themselves not so crowded as they used to be, they might well be frightened, and think it worth their while to retain an Advocate on so alarming an occasion.

IT is said, that some prodigious agreeable people, who are always refining the taste and pleasures of the town, have been put to the trouble and expence of making *Earthquakes* of their own. *Opera's, Masquerades, Ridotto's, Assemblies, Drums, Routs, &c.* were grown so common, that they were quite tiresome and insipid, till some great and happy Genius arose, who improved this low taste into something great, magnificent, and terrible; and what should this be but an *Earthquake* — An elegant Assembly of very fine, and very wise folks, of both sexes, who met together to dance, to romp, to be stark staring mad, to throw the house out at window, and the whole neighbourhood into convulsions and consternations, this is stiled an *Earthquake*. Now should it have so happened, that one of these charming meetings should have been interrupted by the shock of a real *Earthquake*, caused by Him, *who* (as the Prophet tells, *Jer. x. 10.*) *made the earth by his power, and established the world by his wisdom, and whose wrath maketh the earth to tremble*; it might perhaps have frightened some of these merry Gentry into their senses, and serious resolutions never to play the fool any more in

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that way; and so the Town might have been deprived of all the prodigious pleasures and advantages arising from these pretty amusements. For after all, how could the very clever people of both sexes live without them? They would certainly be quite at a loss how to dispose of their time and money; and would be in a manner compelled to live in the same dull, joyless state, as they did in the days of gloomy Superstition, or primitive Christianity, which flesh and blood cannot endure. — It was therefore a seasonable, humane attempt of this learned Writer, to apply the known principles of sound Philosophy to the cure of vulgar prejudices and frightened imaginations. Had any of these fine merry folks been crush'd in the midst of their jollity, by the ruins of the house where they were assembled, and removed to *their proper place*, in a new world of Spirits, (and such there may be, for ought they know to the contrary) it would have been a great consolation to them and their surviving friends, to know that all this was *natural*, and that all the care and caution in the world, could not prevent natural causes from producing their proper effects. —

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But to be serious — Is not this, think you, a strange abuse of Philosophy! Is not this undermining the very foundations of Virtue, and disarming Heaven itself of those terrors, which are every where denounced against the vices and follies of a gay, giddy, licentious, impenitent generation! Is not this applying lenitives and opiates, when caustics and incisions are requisite! Is it a time to speak peace and security to a mad generation, immersed in luxury and debauchery, when God and Nature call upon us to cry aloud; *not to spare, but to lift up our voice like a trumpet*, and awaken them to a just sense of their guilt and their danger! I hope this was not the intention of the Writer; but I think it was the only effect he could reasonably propose, by this easy, * *entertaining* account, (as he calls it) of this dreadful, alarming phenomenon.

God was pleased, in great mercy, to give the old impenitent world of sinners an hundred years warning, that except they repented, they should all be destroyed by an universal Deluge. — It is not to be doubted, but that the Philosophers and Wits of those

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* Vide *London Evening Post*.

days, who, I am apt to think, were as wise and as witty as these of ours, made themselves very merry with the preachments and prædictions of *Noah* about this matter: No doubt, they undertook to demonstrate to those who were weak enough to be frightened, both from the nature and generation of Dews, Rain, and Clouds, and the spherical figure of the Earth, that such an event was absolutely impossible; and crack'd many a scurvy joke, upon the poor old man's notable contrivance to save himself and his family from being *drowned* upon *dry land*: Thus they reasoned, and laugh'd, and were merry, *till the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and swept them all away.*

HAD it pleased GOD to have given the sinners of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* any previous warning, by the preaching of a Prophet, or the shock of an Earthquake, which, with the fire from Heaven, compleated their ruin, they would not have wanted Philosophers to calm their fears, by assuring them, there was nothing in it but the natural effects of their situation; that their soil abounded with beds and pools of sulphurous and bituminous matter, called (*Gen. xiv. 10.*)

slime

slime pits; and that it was almost impossible in the nature of things, but that such concussions must happen. It can, I think, hardly be doubted, but that *righteous Lot*, whose *righteous soul* was vexed from day to day by the *filthy conversation* of his *wicked neighbours*, (2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.) did, besides the good example he gave them, take every prudent opportunity to reprove them for their sins, and admonish them of their danger; but nothing could mend them: *They continued*, as our LORD tells us, (Luke xvii. 28.) *eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, till it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.*

LET it not be imagined, that these two instances are produced as parallels to the present state of these great Cities, or this Nation: GOD forbid.— There are, I trust, numbers, great numbers of devout and pious souls, who bear their publick testimony, and greater numbers who mourn in secret, for the crying sins of this Nation; and daily offer up their prayers to GOD, that our publick Iniquities may not be our ruin. — But that the moral and religious state of these Kingdoms, and this great Metropolis,

tropolis, in particular, are in great disorder, who can deny? The open profaneness and irreligion of the *Great*, and the diabolical licentiousness of the *little* Vulgar; — the general profanation of the Lord's day; — the Churches in many places almost deserted, whilst the publick Roads and places of Resort are crowded with company: — The open and avowed Perjuries, Lies, Subornations, &c. in the political world, encouraged and protected by those, who are bound in duty and honour to detect and punish them: — These, and many other enormities, which every man sees, and every good man laments, give us too much reason to fear, that some National Judgment will quickly overtake us.

BUT, (say You) why this unreasonable zeal at this time of day? Was not the world always bad? — Has not this been the complaint of every age? Are we worse than we have been formerly? Are we worse than our Neighbours?

How bad our Neighbours are, I know not; nor does it concern us to know: but that we are *very bad*, every man who is not obstinately blind, cannot help seeing. If
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any man judge otherwise, let him tell me, let him tell the world, let him satisfy himself, that all is well, that we have nothing to fear, nothing to apprehend from the wickedness of men, or the judgments of GOD; and I shall not contradict him.

BUT if the direct contrary be the judgment of every serious and considerate mind, what can be more seasonable than the advice of the Prophet, Dan. iv. 27. *that we break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto us?* John v. 14. When we have done our best, we shall be in no danger of being over-righteous: Happy will it be for every one, that can assure himself he has done the best he could, *to keep always a conscience void of offence towards GOD and towards man.* Such a man will have nothing to fear, though the EARTH be REMOVED, and the Mountains carried into the midst of the Sea, Psal. xlv. 2. Or, if the language of Horace please you better,

*Si fractus illabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruinae.*

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of Heaven please you better,

2. *Beata illudina orbi*
luminis furtim reges.